

# M Contemporary

## M Contemporary Art Gallery in Ferndale is another piece of the puzzle helping to grow and expand the Detroit art community.

Owner **Melannie Chard** opened the gallery after years of working in the art industry. Chard started her art career in New York City, where she worked at **Sotheby's Auction House** for ten years. She was running the valuations department when she decided to move back to Michigan to be closer to family. Once settled, Chard began working as an independent consultant. "Kind of like helping people put paintings in their house," Chard explained. She met lots of artists while consulting and visiting numerous studios to learn the vernacular of the Detroit art community.

After a while, Chard ended up running an art gallery in Detroit. In 2018 she decided to take a leap and open **M Contemporary Art Gallery**. "I decided to start a gallery because I thought that my experience in the art world, in New York, could translate here and I thought I could help artists," Chard said. Her best friend told her about an available building in Ferndale that would be the perfect location for the gallery. Chard visited the building, but was a little hesitant at first because it wasn't in Detroit; and she worried about it being far from her artists and customers.

However, Chard quickly learned that many of her clients live in and around Ferndale. The location is a very accessible community for artists, collectors, visitors, etc. "People would come see me on a Saturday afternoon. When I was in Detroit, people didn't really do that. I get lots of foot traffic," Chard said. **Joe Reilley** is the manager and helps Chard run M Contemporary Art Gallery.

**CHARD WORKS PRIMARILY WITH DETROIT-BASED ARTISTS.** She's helped artists grow through the years; watching their work sell from then hundreds to now thousands of dollars. "One of the things I really like to focus on is the emerging market; as well as helping artists that are just graduating, coming out of school, that kind of thing. There's so much talent here!"

Chard works with dozens of local artists, including: **Scott Vincent Campbell, Alicia Brown, Kaleigh Belvins, Roy Feldman, Richard Lewis, Matthew Eaton, Ashley Marie, Rashaun Rucker, Rick Vian, Ivan Montoya, Cailyn Dawson, Robert Mirek, John McLaughlin** and many, many others.

"When I find an artist that I'm going to work with or exhibit in the gallery it's because they have a visual style; or whatever they're doing is something I haven't seen or I don't have anything like that in the program. I have a really diverse program in terms of photography, painting, and all different types of people. I'm

always looking for the perspective that I haven't shown. That's something that's important to me." Chard said.

Once artists give their work to Chard for a gallery show or to sell, that's when her job really begins. "For them it's like okay now it's out in the world and now you have to trust me to do what I do and hopefully present it in the best way possible. That's really what I try to do." Chard said. After an exhibition at M Contemporary, Chard will sell the remaining work; either online, directly to collectors, etc. "I curate different collections to put online only," Chard said.

Art shows are rotated every month at the gallery. Chard hosts both group and singular exhibitions. So far in 2024 the gallery has showcased individual shows for **Ashley Marie, Ivan Montoya, and Bowen Kline**. Group shows so far in 2024 includes: **Andre Barker, Kaleigh Blevins, Alicia Brown, Cydney Camp, Gregory Johnson, Joshua Rainer, Rashaun Rucker, Mieyoshi Ragernoir, Shonobi, Simon Anton, Sofia Bicego, Austen Brantley, Scott Vincent Campbell, Amy Feigley-Lee, Robert Mirek, Scheherazade Washington Parrish, Tony Rave, India Solomon, Elizabeth Youngblood**, and many more. In addition to hosting exhibitions, Chard works with interior designers, advises art collectors, puts together art proposals, and in general shares her broad depth of art knowledge with interested parties.



**CHARD BELIEVES IT'S IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE A PLACE** for young, emerging artists to exhibit so they can learn the industry do's and don'ts. For example, bringing tools for art installations, having a bio, listing artwork price, etc. "The more that these artists are around it, the more they're influenced by some of the older artists too. You can just see them grow. They grow really fast. It's really exciting."

In addition to growing a roster of artists, Chard is also growing her collectors base. "The most important thing is to create a network of collectors," Chard explained. "Because you can have all the artists in the world, but if you don't have people supporting those artists you don't keep your lights on." According to Chard, there's a really great collecting base in Detroit. "It spans all different types of collecting within Detroit. Lots of emerging collectors, new collectors; like people who just need something for over their couch. I try to help people find what they're looking for within their price point, and know that they're supporting their local artistic community; that's the important thing."

If an artist is interested in working with M Contemporary Art Gallery contact Chard via email. Include bio, links to their website and social media pages, and photos or information on their pieces in the email. "I always look. People send me things all the time. I always look at it. If I don't have anything for you right then, I might not necessarily respond but sometimes I'll come back to it. Sometimes I'll think oh yeah that was actually interesting. Maybe I'll have something for that person later." Chard said. ■



By *Malissa Martin*

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